CHAPTER FOUR

RAJAH

"Everyone who approaches an Indian prince brings butter in a lordly trowel"

EDWARJD THOMPSON

Time and Tide, January ist, 1938

"The states are . . . glittering pools of absolutism "

JOHN GUNTHER[1]

THE ISSUE OF FEDERATION has brought the whole question of the Princes into increasing prominence.

It is ironical that, while Indian students are at times debarred from work in the hospitals and find it hard to get lodgings on account of colour prejudice, the advent of an Indian prince to London sets the gossip columnists agog. The most aristocratic ladies will dance with him and the highest society receives him; the doors of the greatest are open to him. Why? It is hard to tell.

The greatest of all the Indian princes, if one judges by the standard of character and achievement, is probably the Maharajah of Mysore; he has only been once to England and then unobtrusively. As far as I know, the Nizam of Hyderabad—the richest man in the world—has never been. These paragons of London society are often the smaller princelings, who parade their magnificence before the eyes of Mayfair lovelies at the expense of their impoverished peasantry. The conditions of workers and peasants which have been reviewed in previous chapters are all far worse in many of the states, where there are often fantastic taxes and no factory laws.

[1] Cf, his ~~amusipg~~ article in the American *Saturday Evmng Post,* May I4th, '933.